

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 6A

WASHINGTON TIMES
23 August 1984

Adventurer held as spy freed from Viet prison

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THE WASHINGTON TIMES FOREIGN SERVICE

LONDON — A British adventurer who spent 13 months in a Vietnamese prison after being caught allegedly searching for Capt. William Kidd's pirate treasure arrived back in London yesterday, thin, pale, tight-lipped and with a hint he may have been spying for the United States.

Richard Knight, 48, a former actor from Shoreham, Sussex, was released from a Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) prison Monday, three months after his American companion, Frederick Graham, 19, of Belmont, Calif., was allowed to go home.

Both had been required to pay a \$10,000 fine. Some \$2,600 of Mr. Knight's fine was paid by former school friends, the rest by Mr. Kenneth Crutchlow, an expatriate British businessman who lives in California and accompanied Mr. Knight on the last part of his return trip from Paris to London. Two Thais who were with the pair when they landed on the island of Hon Tre Lau last year are still in the Vietnamese prison.

Mr. Knight claimed that by compar-

ing satellite photographs and old documents, he had located the island where 17th Century Scottish pirate Captain William Kidd buried his treasure. Yesterday, however, he declined to say what his chances of finding the treasure really were, whether it still might be there, or whether he would have another try at finding it.

The party was caught by a Vietnamese naval patrol, he said.

"Unfortunately, they picked up correspondence I had had with the (U.S.) Defense Intelligence Agency," said Mr. Knight, who declined to say what the correspondence was or how he got it. "I had to answer a few pretty stringent questions there. . . ."

He said he was not surprised the Vietnamese took him for a spy, and he added, "I was surprised we had it so good."

Mr. Knight said yesterday, as Mr. Graham had earlier, that the Vietnamese treated them well. Mr. Knight said he was given coffee and a percolator every morning, a banana and five biscuits and bread for lunch, none of which was given to other Vietnamese prisoners.

The coffee was the high point of an otherwise boring prison existence, he said, adding he was allowed to bring the percolator home as a memento. Mr. Graham had said he was under only house detention for much of the time.

Mr. Knight was finally released, according to Mr. Crutchlow, after he got permission from the U.S. Treasury Department to pay the Vietnamese in dollars and after arrangements were made for him to leave Vietnam via Hanoi and Moscow because of a warrant out for his arrest in Thailand for allegedly stealing the boat which took him to "Treasure Island."